

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 25, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

Thank you for your leadership and support in advancing the American Rescue Plan to provide our states and local communities with the critical resources they need to effectively respond to the pandemic. We write to bring your attention to concerns that we have with previous distribution of federal funding to states for COVID-19 vaccine administration efforts in the hopes that we can work with your Administration to address this issue moving forward.

In December 2020, Congress passed the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), which directed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to distribute \$4.5 billion in grants to support state, local, Territorial and Tribal-based COVID-19 vaccination efforts and \$22.4 billion in grants to support COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, surveillance, containment, and virus mitigation efforts. Congress directed HHS to allocate this funding based on the same formula used to determine the FY20 Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) cooperative agreement grants. Unfortunately, the FY20 PHEP funding awards included non-formula components, and HHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) based the recent supplemental allocations solely on the population component of the formula.

This modification disproportionately impacted smaller and more rural states, like Delaware, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The states that we represent would have received at least twice as much funding if HHS had applied the PHEP allocation method in a similar manner to years prior. Because of this, the communities we represent are at risk of not having the necessary resources to urgently administer COVID-19 vaccines and mitigate the spread of the virus.

The House of Representatives and the Senate are working swiftly to pass reconciliation legislation to address the key challenges facing our country's pandemic response efforts. We were pleased to see that the Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act that was reported out of the Energy and Commerce Committee on February 12, 2021 included an additional \$7.5 billion for vaccines and therapeutics, which will include support for state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments, and \$46 billion for testing, contact tracing, and mitigation activities. This

legislative language also includes flexibility for your Administration, which will be critical to helping your bold COVID response plan come to fruition.

As the Congress works to send a bill to your desk, we respectfully recommend that the Administration consider remedies to address this funding inequity for small and rural states that has arisen from the implementation of the CRRSA Act. Equitably distributing the funding provided by Congress will help smaller and more rural states meet the unique challenges they're facing in providing accessible COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution and administration. Furthermore, it will help our states vaccinate communities with the urgency required by the increased emergence of COVID-19 variants in the U.S.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request to work together on behalf of our constituents. We are ready to assist as you work to put an end to this pandemic.

Sincerely,



LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



ANN MCLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress

/s/ Chris Pappas

CHRIS PAPPAS
Member of Congress

/s/ David N. Cicilline

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

/s/ James R. Langevin

JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress